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UNITY AND UNIFORMITY

Unity and uniformity are not the same thing. We are not uniform in our appearance, nature, culture and practice. Yet, we all look forward to be happy; we aspire for peace; we desire to know the unknown; we love beauty and truth. In these lies our unity.

The world would have been a mean and monotonous place if all had been the same. Diversity is the creation's charm. And the greatest joy lies in our seeking and realising the unity that underlies the diversity.

God is one. But there have been many ways leading to Him. He is infinite. That is why there is no end to the variety of experiences regarding Him. The pity is, when one has an experience, one takes that to be the only true experience. When one sees a certain aspect of God, one takes that aspect to be the whole God. One does not stop there; one begins to dispute the validity of others' experiences. Hatred and intolerance are the result.

Manidhwaja, the king of Manipur, of whom you read in this issue in the serial, **Veer Hanuman**, was a devotee of Lord Shiva, but he suffered from the limitation of vision and the lack of sympathy from which most people suffer. However, he was lucky. Lord Shiva Himself cured him of his disease.



GOLDEN WORDS OF YORE

काव्यशास्त्रविनोदेन कालो गच्छति धीमताम् ।

व्यसनेन तु मूर्खाणां निद्रया कलहेन वा ॥

Kāvyaśāstravinodena kālo gacchati dhīmatām

Vyasanena tu mūrkhāṇām nidrayā kalahena vā

The wise use their time enjoying scriptures and poetry. Fools waste their time indulging in luxury, sleep or quarrel.

The Hitopadeshah

उपदेशो हि मूर्खाणां प्रकोपाय न शान्तये ।

पयःपानं भुजङ्गानां केवलं विषवर्धनम् ॥

Upadeśo hi mūrkhāṇām prakopāya na śāntaye

Payahpānam bhujaṅgānām kevalam viṣavardhanam

A good advice cannot quench a fool's anger. It infuriates him more just as milk served to a serpent adds to his poison.

The Panchatantram

उष्ट्राणां च विवाहेषु गीतं गायन्ति गर्वभाः ।

परस्परं प्रशंसन्ति अहो रूपमहो ध्वनिः ॥

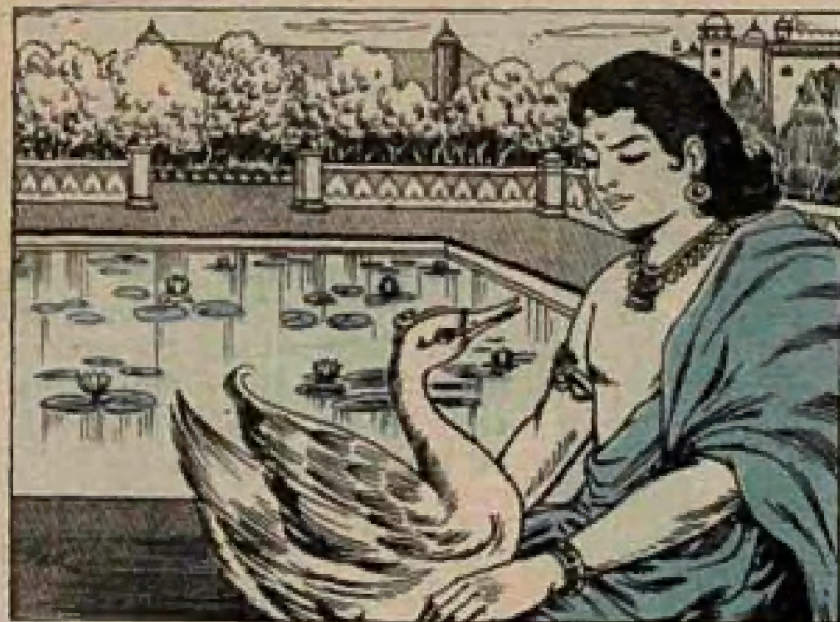
Uṣtrāṇām ca vivāheṣu gītaṁ gāyanti gardabhāḥ

Parasparam praśaṁsanti aho rupamaho dhvaniḥ

riage functions of the camels, the donkeys are the singers. The g the glory of the camels' beauty; the camels praise the donkeys lody!

Samayochita Padyamalika

ORDEALS OF A KING



One day Nala, the young king of Nisadh, caught a golden swan, while strolling in his garden. Said the swan, "Do not harm me, O King. I shall sing your glory before Damayanti, the beautiful princess of Vidarbha."

True to its word, the swan met Damayanti, and spoke to her of the virtues of Nala in such lofty terms that the princess fell in love with Nala.

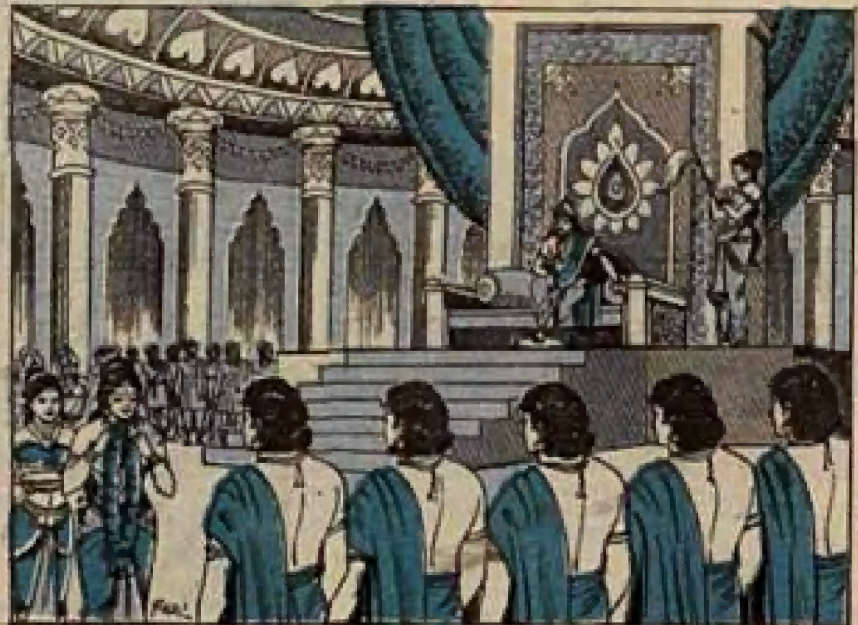


Soon the king of Vidarbha arranged for Damayanti's Swayamvara. Like other princes, Nala too proceeded to Vidarbha. Midway he met four gods, Indra, Varuna, Agni and Yama. The gods requested Nala to meet Damayanti as their emissary and to ask her to marry one of them.



Nala duly met Damayanti and conveyed to her the message of the gods. But the princess said she had been determined to marry none other than Nala himself. Nala faithfully reported this to the gods.

The gods were surprised that Damayanti should prefer a mortal to a god! At the *Swayamvara*, they all assumed the appearance of Nala and stood beside him. Poor Damayanti was at a loss to know who was the real Nala.



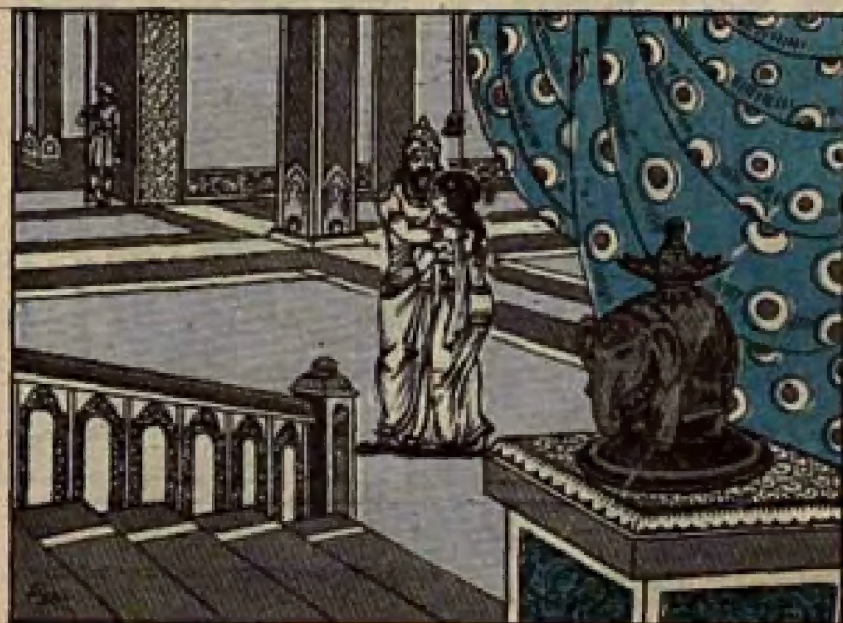
Damayanti was not to give up. She uttered a prayer to the gods. The power of her prayer showed the gods in their real luminous forms. Damayanti found out who real Nala was. She garlanded him.

Cali—The Being of Falsehood—who too was present in the *Swayamvara*, got terribly jealous of Nala. He led Nala to lose his kingdom and flee to the forest, with Damayanti. Further, Cali entered Nala and made him desert his wife.



Wandering in the forest, Nala saw a huge snake about to die in a fire. He dragged the snake out of the fire, only to be bitten by it! But the snake said, "My poison will torment Cali within you and will oblige him to leave you."

After much travail, Damayanti returns to her father's house. She comes to know that Nala is serving, incognito, as the charioteer to the king of Ayodhya, Rituparna.





Under Damayanti's advice, her father sends a message to Rituparna saying that there will be another *Swayamvara* for Damayanti, in a short time. Rituparna knew that his new charioteer alone can drive the chariot to reach Vidarbha on time.

Rituparna and Nala had just reached Vidarbha, when, tormented with the poison in Nala, Kali suddenly went out of him. Nala was his noble self once more.



Needless to say, there was no question of a *Swayamvara* again. It was to bring Nala back that Rituparna had been summoned. Nala and Damayanti were united. The event brought joy to all.



TALES BEHIND PROVERBS AND PHRASES

THE MYSTERIOUS BOY

"My lord! I have come to report to you about the unfaithful conduct of one of your officers. If you do not disclose to him that I am the informer, I will tell you all," said a fellow to the sultan of Bijapur.

"I assure you your safety. Go on," commanded the sultan.

"My lord, it is about the gentleman, Damaji, who is your collector over Mangalwedha region. He had collected a large quantity of grain as taxes from the landowners. But he has distributed everything, free, to the people. Nothing remains for you," reported the fellow.

"Who are you?" demanded the sultan.

"My lord! I am his clerk. I was pained to see him wasting your property. I thought it my duty to bring his conduct to your notice," explained the fellow.

"We should thank you. But we must admit that Damaji has been an honest and efficient officer. If he is squandering away our grain without our permission, he must have grown mad. Otherwise you are a liar. You are to be detained here until the truth has been found out," announced the sultan.

"Detained, my lord?" the clerk asked in panic.

"Yes. But if your report is found to be true, you will be

made the collector over Mangalwedha in place of Damaji," assured the sultan.

The clerk's face beamed with joy. That is exactly what he desired—to become the collector himself. So far as his allegation was concerned, nobody could prove it untrue, he was sure. The detention became a matter of joy for him.

The sultan sent a messenger to Mangalwedha asking Damaji either to send the grain collected, or its value in case the grain had been sold out.

A few days after the messenger left, a boy appeared before the sultan and said, "I am a servant of Damaji. He has sent

me to deposit the taxes collected, in cash, in your treasury."

The boy emptied a bag before the sultan. The content were gold coins. They were counted by the sultan's accountants. The amount was found to be what was expected to be received from Damaji.

The accountants handed out a receipt to the boy. The boy accepted it with a smile. By then the sultan's attention had been focussed on the boy. There was something fascinating about the boy. His glittering eyes at once radiated intelligence and innocence. His smile was bewitching.



By then the sultan had no other thought in his mind than that of the mysterious boy. Every word the boy had spoken, every child-like gesture he had made, was haunting him.

"Damaji, tell me, had you ever confided your plight to anybody? Had you ever appealed to anybody for help, fearing punishment from me?" asked the sultan.

"Whom can I appeal, my lord? Who can come to my rescue if you decide to punish me for my distributing your grain without your permission?" said Damaji. But next moment, he said again, "Yes, my lord, I had appealed to one—the Supreme One whom I worship in the form of Lord Vithal of Pandharpur."

As he said this, he took out of his bag a picture of Lord Vithal. And no sooner had he unfolded the picture than a slip of paper fell down from his bag. The minister picked it up. It was the receipt that had been given to the boy!

The sultan leaned over the picture and cried out, "I cannot forget the eyes and the contour of the boy. Yes, it is your Lord Vithal who had come to your rescue! I was a fool to be trying to trace him through a hundred sepoys!"

"You are not fool, my lord, you are among the luckiest of devotees of the Lord. He would not have appeared before you in a human form otherwise," said Damaji.





THE OLD MAN'S SECRET

Kisan was a well-to-do peasant. He had two able sons. In due course he chose two brides for them and got them married.

He was now a happy man, with two sons to guard and increase his property and two daughters-in-law to serve him.

But the two young ladies were far from happy. Kisan never allowed them any comfort. They had no freedom to spend any part of their husbands' earnings. The sons were so trained that they would hand over to their father the last paisa they receive.

Once Kisan fell sick. His sons wanted to call a physician. "No need," said Kisan. "The sickness has come of its own; it will go away of its own. What

use spending money on a physician?"

But Kisan's sickness was on the increase. Soon he lost his power of speech. Even then, through gestures, he checked his sons from calling a physician.

Now that Kisan was an invalid, the ladies took hold of the situation. They influenced their husbands to divide the property between themselves. When that was done, the elder son told Kisan, "Father! This room is in my share. It needs repair. Better you shift to the cowshed."

With his younger brother's help, he shifted the old man to the cowshed.

Kisan's suffering was great. Neither the sons nor the daugh-

"Is it not queer that Damaji should entrust a boy like you with so much money?" asked the sultan.

"What is queer about it? If anything, it is clever of my master. Who would suspect me—with these tattered and soiled clothes—to be carrying anything valuable? Bandit or burglar—all would keep off me throughout the long road," said the boy with another wave of smile.

The sultan was impressed with the explanation. Suddenly he remembered of the clerk who had accused Damaji of squandering away the grain.

"Throw that wicked fellow

into our regular gaol. We will first find out why he wanted to defame Damaji and then determine further punishment for him," he said.

While the sultan was growling about the clerk, Damaji's boy had left the court. There was no reason for anybody to stop him.

But the sultan wanted to talk to the boy. "He could not have gone far," said those who had seen him leaving. Some sepoys rushed out to call the boy back. But an hour later they returned and reported that they could not find him anywhere.

"You incompetent fools!"





shouted the sultan. "The boy is no flying horse to disappear into the clouds. Let a hundred sepoy's gallop forth in all directions. Find him out by any means!"

The sultan's order was put into execution immediately. Some of the sepoy's brought to the sultan's presence nervous urchins and bewildered tramps only to be rebuked.

The sultan's eagerness to see the boy was on the increase.

"My lord, let us send another messenger to Damaji, asking him to send the boy," proposed a minister.

"Let us do so," agreed the

sultan, somewhat pacified. The search for the boy was given up.

But before a messenger had been sent to Damaji, there arrived Damaji himself, looking pale.

"My lord, it is the famine which obliged me to distribute the collected grain. I could not bear to see the people starving. Tax they can pay again only if they survive!" said Damaji with folded hands.

Everybody around looked puzzled. The sultan himself took quite some time to speak.

"Damaji! What is this riddle you are saying? Who needs your explanation after you have deposited the full revenue?" asked the sultan.

Now it was for Damaji to look puzzled.

"Where is that boy who brought the money?" asked a minister.

"What boy? What money?" asked Damaji falteringly.

Soon it was clear that Damaji knew nothing of the boy who introduced himself as his servant. He had sent no money. The clerk who had reported that he was giving away to the people the grain collected as tax had spoken the fact. The fellow was released.

ters-in-law took care of him. He was served with scanty food and that too most irregularly. He grew extremely weak.

One day, on a visit to the cowshed, the elder son observed that the old man was trying to say something, but was failing in his effort. His eyes were full of anxiety.

At the elder son's call the other son as well the two ladies gathered there. They all tried their best to understand what the old man was saying, but could not. However, they had no doubt in their minds that what the old man was trying to communicate was something very serious and important.

They concluded that he was struggling to tell them about some hidden property. But unless he recovered his speech, they will never get his hint.

They carried him to the town and kept him under the treatment of a great physician. The old man recovered his speech, although much money had to be spent on that account.

All returned to the village. "Tell us now, where have you buried the wealth?" asked the sons.

"What wealth?" Kisan expressed surprise.

"What then were you trying so hard to tell us the other day?" asked the sons.

"Oh, that!" nodded Kisan. "You see, I saw a calf chewing up one of our broom-sticks. I was trying to tell you to remove the broom-stick!" revealed the old man with a sigh.

Needless to say, his sons and daughters-in-law gave out long sighs too.



The Prince and the WIZARD

(The hideout of the rebels was attacked by King Bhuvansingh's army. The old Master, the leader of the rebels, died of burns. While dying, he revealed that Badal was the rightful heir to the throne. One night Badal enters the palace to kill King Bhuvansingh, the usurper's son. He is found out and given a hot chase. He sneaks into Princess Pratiba's room and finds himself face to face with her.)

9

"O Princess, are you awake?" Someone asked, making his voice as soft as possible in that tense situation, and making mild knocks on the door. A dozen voices - anxious but suppressed - buzzed behind the knocker.

The princess stood undone. The window of her room opposite the door was open on the garden. A whiff of breeze disturbed the lamp. In the flickering flame the princess saw the intruder's shadow fluctuating on the wall. She got scared for a moment. Badal stood like a statue, his eyes fixed on the floor.

This is the young man who had risked his life and wrestled with a tiger for sake of her safety. This is the young man who took the risk of confronting Samser and his guards to restore to the innocent people

their looted property. Can this brave and noble young man do any harm to anybody? In the mind of the princess the momentary fear dissolved like a puff of smoke.

And she blushed - when she reflected on Badal's silence to her question asking him if he had come there with the purpose of meeting her!

Instantly she decided upon her course of action.

"Can you escape through this window?" she asked in a whisper.

"I can," replied Badal enthusiastically, also in whisper.

"I am afraid, you cannot. The palace must have been surrounded by guards," the princess uttered under the breath.

Badal smiled and advanced towards the window. "Princess! Must I, who dared into

the palace in this manner, fear a few stray guards? Once I am in the open, I can be as swift as the free breeze! Please do me a favour. Try to divert the attention of my chasers to another direction."

Badal brought out a string of black rope from under his belt and disappeared on the other side of the window.

The princess opened the door. Her face dazzled in the light of a number of torches held high.

"What is the matter?" she demanded, feigning a sleepy tone.

The chief of the palace guards stepped forward and said, "Pardon this disturbance, O Prin-

cess, someone has stealthily entered the palace, obviously with some evil motive. We have been trying to capture him. It seems, the fellow came running this way. Surely, your room was locked and he could not have gone in. But we thought it proper to be sure."

The princess who stood on the door-sill, could look over the heads of the cluster of guards and servants facing her.

"There goes someone!" she exclaimed, pointing her finger in the opposite direction. The guards immediately turned and ran, following the indication she gave.

But the chief of the guards



entered her room and rushed to the very window through which Badal had escaped. The princess could not stop him. This special officer had the right to search any part of the palace, even the king's or the queen's private apartments.

She waited with bated breath. The guard leaned over the window and shouted, "Listen, those who are down. Go over to the other side!"

He then hurried out of the room. The princess heaved a sigh of relief.

The moon shone bright. The hullabaloo inside the palace and the running about of the sentries in the compound had roused many around the palace from their sleep. Among them were the wizard and his disciple. They came out of their inn and gazed at the palace. All they could see was the shadow-like guards running along the balconies and the terrace, raising swords, sticks and torches. But it was not difficult for them to understand that someone had intruded into the palace and an effort was afoot to catch him.

Ramu who loitered before the inn was watching the situation with great anxiety. He did

not know when the wizard had walked up to him.

"I have seen you beforehand, haven't I?" queried the wizard giving Ramu an affectionate pat on the back. Ramu shrank back and that inspired the wizard to a laughter. "Why are you so nervous?" he asked. "I will not be surprised if the man who has raised the storm in the castle is none other than your brave friend!"

Ramu could not hide his surprise.

The wizard laughed again. "I saw both of you in action the other day-when you snubbed Samser so boldly by locking him up in a cabin behind the castle. I have nothing but praise for your friend!"

Ramu's face brightened up. By then he had grown sure that Badal was in danger. He said, his voice betraying tension, "It is so kind of you to say so. I too have seen you in action. You can perform feats and miracles which are beyond the dreams of mortals! If you really appreciate bravery in a young man, I hope, you will not mind helping him with your power if he needs it!"

The wizard laughed and patted Ramu again.

"I will be pleased to meet your friend, I will be most willing to help him too, if he is out to achieve any particular mission. Bring your friend to me," said the wizard.

Ramu, while listening to the wizard, was again and again casting his look at the palace.

"I can lead him to you only if..." Ramu stopped abruptly.

"Only if he escapes tonight's ordeal, isn't that what you wish to say? Ha ha!" the wizard looked Ramu straight in the face.

Ramu was still not certain if he should confess that it was indeed his friend who was the target of the wild chase going on in the palace.

Just then was heard the frustrated voice of some guards, shouting, "The fellow has escaped. He jumped off the eastern parapet while we looked for him in the western part of the compound!"

"Did you hear that?" said the wizard, giving a shake to Ramu. "What is it that helped him escape? Is it not my mantric power?"

Ramu promptly freed himself from the wizard's hold. Eager to make a dash for his friend, he said, "Thank you, O great wizard, we shall meet again."

"Very well. But I shall not be in the town for long. You certainly know that there is a





building in ruins on a hill to the south-west of this place, on the brink of the forest. Will you meet me there on this day next week, in the evening?" asked the wizard.

"Very well, we will," uttered Ramu and he ran away.

As usual, before the sunrise, drummers and pipers played their music welcoming the morning, in the courtyard of the palace. The change of sentries at the gate took place as usual too. From the temple could be heard the sound of the gong.

But despite the appearance of normalcy, the atmosphere was charged with tension. Groups

of people gathered on various spots outside the palace. Needless to say, they discussed only one thing: the daring trespasser who escaped unscathed!

Samser, mounted on a horse and followed by a troop of cavalry, galloped round the palace. A stranger sneaking into the palace and making good his escape foiling the efforts of a horde of guards to capture him was no joke. It was a serious loss of face for the royalty. Samser tried to make good the loss by drawing a fearful face and trotting around, throwing menacing glances at the people, as if he will pick up the trespasser any moment!

When he happened to pass by the inn, the wizard stepped forward and greeted him with, "Hail to the prince of princes, the heroic Samser!"

Samser reined up his horse and stopped, displaying a broad grin. The wizard's address had pleased him.

"I am the humble wizard who attracted the king's attention last evening. I was told that His Majesty will like me to give a demonstration before him," said the wizard.



"That is right," responded Samser.

"But, I am afraid, in the present situation the king or yourself might not be in a mood for enjoying a show of wizardry!" said the wizard.

"Why? What has happened for us to lose our usual mood? You are referring to the burglar episode, are you? What is there for us to be upset about it? Don't I look jolly enough?" demanded Samser, displaying a broader grin.

"You do look, O Prince, as jolly as a crow in the morning," said the wizard.

"Right. It was a pity that I was fast asleep when they chased the trespasser. Otherwise I would have, I would

have..." Samser faltered for lack of appropriate words to describe his possible action.

"You would have cut the trespasser into five hundred pieces!" said the wizard.

"Exactly. But why five hundred? Into five thousand pieces! You could have counted them!" asserted Samser.

"It has been awfully kind of you to spare me of that labour, Your Majesty!" said the wizard.

Samser looked pleased again. "You must present your show in the court today itself. I shall inform the king about it right now. Our messenger will lead you into the palace in due time," said Samser and he galloped away.

(To be continued)

THE PRINCE AND THE WIZARD is adapted from the popular movie, *Patal Bairavi*, the property of M/s. VIJAYA PRODUCTIONS PRIVATE LTD., Madras. Reproduction or imitation, in part or in full, in any manner and in any language, is strictly prohibited.

The whole village was deserted. The aged, the children and the women had fled to their safety. The youth of the village had gone out, at the call of their king, to face an invading foreign army.

Deserted too was the house of one Harishchandra, but for one soul! Six of Harishchandra's seven sons had gone out to the battlefield. The seventh one had been left at home, for, he was blind. A neighbour who

had promised to look after the boy had ultimately left the village too, in panic.

The lone boy felt restless. He faltered out of his house, crying aloud for someone to hear him, and was soon on the way that led into the forest.

On the roadside was an old, dry well. The blind boy fell into it.

Blindness itself was ordeal enough for him. To that was added his confinement in the



Ramdas, a musician in Akbar's court. Upon a journey to Mathura, while a boy, he saw the famous saint, Vallabhacharya. The saint recognised in the boy a poet and devotee of great merit and the boy too saw in the saint his destined guru. A few years later he joined the saint. He spent a good number of years in Shrinath Temple at Govardhana, at his guru's bidding, and composed innumerable lyrics on the Krishna theme. They are so lively, so vibrant with true emotion, and so sweet to ears and so soothing to mind that it will appear their composer saw what he wrote.

And legend also claims that Krishna loved to hear him sing his compositions. As the blind Surdas would sing on seated on a slab of stone in a lonely courtyard of the temple, Krishna, as a child, would sit before him listening to him in rapt attention.

We do not know how many lyrics Surdas had composed. Many must have been lost in course of time. But his anthology, known as *Sursagar*, contains 500 of them and each one is a gem. The *Sursagar's* influence on the devotional poetry of India in general and the Hindi poetry in particular can hardly be exaggerated.



well. He wept bitterly and cried out for help. One by one he shouted the names of all the people he knew. But no response came.

At last he thought of Krishna. He prayed to him for help. He did not know what happened thereafter. He forgot that he lay in a helpless situation. He felt to be in most joyous company. All was delightful. The sorrows he had experienced seemed to be a small price for the joy that was now his.

And he did not know how he emerged from the well and how he returned home. For him, there was nothing surprising in the feat. He had got Krishna as his companion—a companion who never deserted him.

What is more, the boy forgot that he was blind. All that was truly beautiful and divine could be seen by him, though not through the physical eyes.

He saw the child Krishna dancing with the musical tinklets tied to his tiny feet; he saw him as a cowherd boy playing flute on the bank of the river Yamuna, he saw him playing hide-and-seek with other cowherd boys, or stealing butter from the kitchen of the milk-



maids of Gopa.

He had no sight; still he could see them. But those blessed with eyes never saw them. The boy, for their benefit, began singing out what he saw. Out of the blind boy slowly emerged the immortal poet—Surdas.

This is one of the legends about this great poet who was born in a village not far from Delhi, in the last part of the 15th century. His father, Hari-shchandra, is supposed to be a descendant of Chand Bardai, the court poet of the famous Chauhan king, Prithviraj.

Another legend says that Surdas was the son of Baba

At the centre of an elegant street in the city of Bagdad stood a large mansion. It was surrounded by a garden abounding in flowers. Gardeners sprayed the plants frequently. From the interior of the mansion came the sweet notes of music.

A hungry-looking man strolled before the mansion. Time and again he thought of entering it and asking for some food. But modesty checked him. He too was a man of

prosperity, and not long ago either. But time ran against him and from a merchant he had been reduced to a beggar.

Soon he saw a group of richly dressed men advancing towards the mansion. He quietly followed them. At the gate the men were warmly received by the servants of the mansion. The pauper merchant mingled with the guests and the servants took no notice of him. Thus he managed to enter the mansion.



But once inside, he felt nervous. The master of the mansion, glittering in bejewelled attires, came forward to greet the guests. They sat inside a magnificent hall and exchanged pleasantries. The beggar watched them, hiding behind a pillar.

His attention was soon diverted to another part of the house. One of the servants of the mansion led four stout dogs to the veranda and another servant set four dishes of meat before them. Not only were the meats luxuriously cooked, but also the dishes were made of gold.

As soon as the servants left the place, the beggar felt like

snatching away a dish and devouring the food. But he had to check himself. The dog looked ferocious.

Suddenly one of the dogs looked up at him. The beast's eyes seemed full of pity. It raised one of its forepaws and signed him to come closer. The man was surprised. But the dog repeated the indication. At the same time, hunger was tearing the man apart. He advanced slowly and emptied the dish while the dog looked on. When he was about to get up, the dog made another sign, this time indicating that he should take away the dish too. The man showed reluctance. But



the dog pushed the dish towards him.

Temptation got the better of him. He picked up the dish and slipped out of the house.

He left Bagdad and went to a smaller town where he had some friends. He sold the gold dish and, with the money, set up a trade. He prospered soon. In a few years he became one of the richest merchants in the town.

But he never forgot the debt he owed to the master of the mansion in Bagdad. He decided to visit him and pay him the value of the gold dish along with some precious presents.

However, several years passed

before he could make it. At last, with a camel loaded with gifts and the value of the gold dish in a bag, the merchant reached Bagdad and sought out the mansion. But great was his surprise. The mansion was in ruins. There was no guard at the gate, no garden; no servant seemed to be around. The interior looked dark and deserted.

Soon he saw an old man hovering around the desolate house. He called him and asked him how the mansion came to that condition.

"Time changes. Providence does not allow anything to continue in the same condition for-



ever. Though once this mansion was the very name of wealth and happiness, today it is a sight of sorrow and desolation," replied the old man.

"But where is the master of the house?" queried the merchant.

"The man whom you have just talked to is the man you are seeking. But what have you to do with this unlucky man whom everybody has forsaken?" asked the old man.

The merchant greeted the old man and said, "I am happy that I meet you at the time of your need." He then narrated all about his stealing the gold dish.

"O venerable old man, be pleased to accept the value of

the gold dish and the gifts I have brought for you," the merchant said at the conclusion of his narration.

The old man stood staring at him for a moment. He then said, slowly but sternly, "Man, are you mad? Can I accept the price of what my dog had given over to you? Can I be that mean? Go away, man, leave me alone!"

The old man retired into the gloomy interior of the ruined mansion without giving the merchant another chance to plead with him. The merchant sighed and stood like a statue for a long time. He then went back to his town.





BRIDEGROOM FOR THE MOUSE-GIRL

A Tale from the Panchatantra

Long long ago there lived a sage on the bank of a river, along with his wife. There was not a soul other than them nearby. The sage did not mind that. But his wife felt lonely, more so when the sage sat in meditation for hours at a stretch.

She would have loved to chit-chat with another woman; but there was no village at hand which she could visit at will. Besides, it was not safe for her to leave the sage alone. When the sage sat in meditation, he forgot all about the world around him. He won't know if a stray dog or jackal entered the hut and ate up their food.

The sage realised his wife's sentiments. One day a crow

stole a tiny mouse from a hole and settled down on the branch of a tree in order to kill and eat the prey. Just then it saw that the tree and the cave behind it were the home of owls. It got scared and flew away, dropping the mouse.

It so happened that the sage was returning home after a bath in the river. The tiny mouse fell before him. It was half dead. The sage took pity on it. Suddenly a highly original idea occurred to him. Why not transform this baby mouse into a human baby? His wife felt bored with her loneliness. A child can keep her occupied—he thought.

He uttered a mantra and waved his hand. Out of the



mouse emerged a bonny infant—a girl. Great was the joy of the sage's wife. She picked up the girl and nursed her with much love and attention.

Years passed. The infant grew up to be a charming damsel.

"Now, my husband, you must find out a suitable bridegroom for my daughter. She is beautiful and she is good at the household chores. Besides, she can sing and even dance. I should expect her to get a worthy bridegroom," the sage's wife told her husband.

"Worthy? I can command the worthiest bridegroom to marry

our daughter," exclaimed the sage.

"Really? Let me see you command a godly being," said the sage's wife.

"Well, I can command even the sun god, what to speak of a godly being!" asserted the sage.

"Don't boast of your power. Prove it," challenged his wife.

The sage closed his eyes and invoked the sun god. There was a spurt of light and the sun god stood before him.

"What do you want of me, O Sage?" asked the sun god.

"Will you please marry my daughter? She can cook for you and sing to you," said the sage. Then, looking at the bride, he asked, "How do you find this bridegroom?"

"Father! He is too luminous for me to approach him. Find me a worthier bridegroom," replied the girl, to the sage's surprise.

"Who is superior to you?" the sage asked the sun god.

"Cloud. He alone can dim my glory!" replied the sun god.

The sage invoked the cloud. Upon his arrival, the sage asked the girl, "How do you find him?"

"Too dark to match me and too cold for my touch," was the



girl's observation.

"Who is superior to you?" the sage asked the cloud.

"Wind. He can push me hither and thither," was the cloud's reply.

The sage invoked the wind. "How do you find him?" he asked the girl.

"Quite unreliable. Always moves about! Don't you know anyone superior to him?" asked the girl.

To the sage's query, the wind said that the hill was superior to

him because he could never disturb him. The sage invoked the hill. But observed the girl, "He looks too idle. None superior to him?"

"The mouse is superior to me. He can bore a tunnel through me!" said the hill.

The sage had a mouse brought there. The girl blushed and whispered to the sage's wife, "Mother! What a wonderful bridegroom!" Thus did the mouse-girl at last find her suitable match in the mouse!



Ramu : If Shakespeare were here today, all would flock to see him.

Ravi : Naturally. He would be 413 years old today. Who wouldn't like to have a look at such an aged man?



OTHELLO, THE MOOR OF VENICE

The terrible story of Othello shows how a man of noble nature can be reduced to a demoniac murderer—under the influence of jealousy.

Othello, a Moor of Venice, was indeed a noble and simple-hearted man. Great was his joy when Desdemona, the beautiful daughter of a Venetian aristocrat, fell in love with him and married him secretly. Her father accused the Moor of winning his daughter through sorcery. But the Venetian court was then in no position to try the case. The island of Cyprus, which was under Venetian control, was about to be attacked by Turks and only the brave general Othello could save it.

The scene changes to Cyprus. Othello arrives there only to find, happily, that a storm had played havoc with the invaders' fleet. The survivors had fled.

His happiness rises higher when Desdemona joins him there. Hardly can he think of

the grave that was being dug for his happiness. And under no circumstance could he dream that the grave-digger would be his own personal officer, Iago.

A strange fellow was this Iago. He had of course some grievance against Othello because, he believed, Othello had promoted Cassio to the rank of lieutenant disregarding his claim to the post. But that could not be strong enough justification for his action. He hated him for sake of hatred.

First, Iago made the poor Cassio drunk. Cassio, for his behaviour, lost his position. Next, Iago advised Cassio to plead with Desdemona to persuade Othello to pardon him. While Cassio was doing this, Iago made Othello believe that the two were in love, behind his back! His suspicion was confirmed when a hand-kerchief which he had given Desdemona was found to be in Cassio's possession.

Othello could not contain his fury. He smothered Desdemona to death. Iago's wickedness was exposed at last, but it had been too late. Othello tried to kill him, but failed. However, he succeeded in killing himself.

Cassio became the new

Governor of Cyprus. His first duty was to capture Iago and order for him a painful death.

Othello, one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, is a grim warning against any passionate and hasty action which characterises its jealous hero.





A PLEASANT SURPRISE

It was high time that the people of Shyampur built a new temple for their deity. The old shrine was crumbling down and it was a shame for the villagers.

The priest was a wise and clever man. He consulted some leading villagers and decided to raise a fund for the construction of the temple. They went in a delegation to the local landlord and requested him for a donation.

"Very well, first begin with others. I shall give my share in due time," said the landlord.

But the priest and the others knew that the landlord was a miser and he hardly kept his word in such matters.

"But it will be a good omen to begin the subscription-drive from you," said the priest.

"That will inspire others to follow suit!" said another

villager.

"Very well. I promise you a thousand rupees," said the landlord as he smiled to himself. He was sure that the fellows will never get more than one-tenth of it from him.

"That is a good amount and it is a good beginning. Now, Sir, we have called a meeting this evening where the villagers would be asked to contribute their mite to the fund. We request you to preside over the meeting. And it would be setting an inspiring example to others if you are good enough to give your donation there, on the spot," said the priest.

The landlord was very fond of presiding over meetings. But it could not be expected of him to spend a thousand rupees for getting the chance.

"I don't have so much money

at the moment. But I will pay a part of the promised amount," he said.

"That will be enough!" said the villagers.

But the villagers also knew that whatever the landlord would pay that evening would be all that he would pay!

It so happened that the landlord's wife was religious and charitable. The delegates met her privately and acquainted her with the situation.

"I shall do the needful," she assured them with a smile.

The meeting was well-attended. The landlord was very happy to preside over it.

"It is a great news for us all that befitting his generosity and dignity, our noble landlord has offered a thousand rupees to the temple fund. And he is going to pay his share right now!" announced the priest and he extended his palms before the landlord.

The landlord stood up and brought out a bundle of notes from his pocket with a broad smile. But while handing over the bundle to the priest, his face paled. The priest at once raised the bundle high and exclaimed, "Look at the benevolent deed of our landlord! He told us that he will give us only a part of





his promised donation today. But, in order to give us a pleasant surprise, he gives us the whole amount right now!"

The meeting was dissolved after a vote of thanks for the president! The landlord, back at home, asked his wife, "I don't understand how a bundle of ten pieces of ten-rupee notes which

I had kept in my pocket changed into ten pieces of hundred-rupee notes!"

"Your manager gave me a thousand rupees this evening. I kept that bundle in your pocket and took out the smaller bundle, just to give you a pleasant surprise!" said his wife.

SPOT THE TEN DIFFERENCES



THE DELAYED REVENGE

Dark and desolate was the night and fearful the atmosphere. Thunder roared and it rained from time to time. There were moments when King Vikram could hear peals of weird laughter. Intermittent lightning even revealed terrible faces. But nothing terrified him. He climbed the tree and brought down the corpse and throwing it astride on his shoulder, began crossing the cremation ground.

Suddenly observed the vampire that possessed the corpse, "O King, whatever be the motive of your work, it is wise of you to do it yourself instead of deputing someone to do it. One can never be sure of others. For example take the case of King Gunasingh's fate. You haven't heard of it, have you? Let me then tell you the story. It should bring you relief."

The vampire went on with his narration: King Gunasingh was a strict ruler. He often donned a disguise and roamed





about in the kingdom, supervising the condition of his subjects.

One day, while passing through a certain region of his kingdom, he felt a desire to try the honesty of his officer who was in charge of that region. He and his minister, both in disguise, met the officer and reported to him of a false dispute between them. The officer asked them to meet him the next day for his decision on the case.

From the report of the dispute it appeared that the minister was right and the king was wrong. However, at night the

king met the officer and pushing a bagful of gold mohurs into his hand, pleaded with him to give the judgment in his favour.

The officer, thus bribed, announced his judgment the next day which went in the king's favour. At once the king removed his mask and clapped his hands. His sepoy came running and arrested the officer.

Accused of taking bribe, the officer was put to death.

The king's action was not approved by many who said that the punishment had been too harsh. For taking bribe one could be fined or jailed, not killed.

But, strangely indeed, among those who supported the king's action was Subir, the executed officer's young son. He said that the king had every right to hang a criminal, if thereby he wanted to set an example of sound rule.

Subir was a smart and intelligent young man. When the king wanted to appoint a young man to the post of his personal emissary, Subir excelled the other candidates in all the necessary qualities and got the job. In a short time he earned the king's confidence. The king consulted him on many issues

and depended on him for solving many complex problems.

Suddenly King Gunasingh faced a crisis when the neighbouring king attacked his kingdom. There was enmity between the two kingdoms for a long time. King Gunasingh had defeated the enemy king thrice beforehand. This time the enemy had come sufficiently prepared to give a long and valiant battle to Gunasingh.

One night Gunasingh summoned Subir to his confidential chamber and said, "We have won over one of the bodyguards of the enemy king. He has promised to kill his king for one lakh gold mohurs. You

have to meet him and give him half of the amount and assure him that the other half will be his after he has accomplished his task. You alone can undertake the perilous journey into the enemy camp and encourage the bodyguard to do the needful."

Subir nodded and went out. He marched into the enemy camp. But instead of meeting the bodyguard, he met the enemy king and disclosed to him the plot to murder him. He then enrolled himself as the enemy king's lieutenant and led his army against Gunasingh. In the fierce battle that ensued, Subir himself killed King Guna-



Subir claiming that he was avenging his father's murder. The victorious neighbouring king appointed Subir as the governor of the conquered kingdom. Subir proved himself a just ruler. He punished criminals according to the degree of their crimes.

The vampire paused and asked King Vikram in a challenging tone: "Wasn't Subir extremely revengeful? But if he had decided to avenge his father's death, why did he wait for such a long time? Answer these questions, O King, if you can. If you keep mum despite your ability to give the answers, your head would roll off your shoulders!"

The king spoke out without losing a moment, "Subir was not revengeful at all. He was an idealist who believed that

King Gunasingh too was an idealist. But he was suddenly disillusioned with the king. Gunasingh had punished his father with death after declaring that bribery was a grave crime. Now Subir saw that Gunasingh himself was bribing the enemy king's bodyguard. If Subir's father deserved death, Gunasingh too deserves death. As soon as Subir found out that Gunasingh was no idealist, but an opportunist, he thought it his duty to avenge his father's death. Putting his father to death now seemed to him as not a just punishment, but a cruel murder committed by the hypocrite Gunasingh. This explains his action."

No sooner had King Vikram completed his answer than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.





VEER HANUMAN

Manidhwaja, the king of Manipur, was not only a brave ruler, but also a great devotee of Lord Shiva. A hundred times had he thrown himself into holy fire and ten times had he beheaded himself—but had come back to life by virtue of his unshakable faith in his God. Pleased with him, Lord Shiva had appeared before him and had granted him a number of boons.

At Manidhwaja's need, Shiva's trident came to his help and destroyed his enemies. He had been rewarded with the sacred Pasupata weapon. That was not all; Shiva had promised to fight on his behalf, if need be. No wonder that Manidhwaja would come to believe that he

was invincible and feel proud on that score.

There was, however, a wrong side to his devotion for Shiva. He had driven out of his kingdom all those who worshipped other gods. He had even destroyed the shrines of other deities.

A large number of his subjects, thus tyrannised, fled to Ayodhya. They received cordial treatment at the hands of Rama's officers. Rama himself assured them that Manidhwaja will soon be humbled.

The wandering horse of Rama galloped into Manipur. Manidhwaja lost no time in capturing it. Lakshmana who escorted the horse sent a message to Manidhwaja asking him to sur-



render the horse and win Rama's friendship. That would do him good.

But Lakshmana's messenger received the most unexpected treatment from Manidhwaja. The king branded him with a heated trident and said, "Go and tell your master that I have no need of Rama's friendship. Rama has killed numerous devotees of Shiva, like Ravana. Hence I deem it my duty to kill him. And know this that even a hundred Ramas, together, can do no harm to me."

Never had Lakshmana dreamt of such insult. He, along with Bharata and Shatrughna, got ready to free the horse by force.

Their soldiers, responding to Lakshmana's call, at once launched a fierce attack.

Their valour and war-cry alarmed Manidhwaja. He invoked Shiva's trident.

The trident, emerging from Shiva's temple like a flash of lightning, was on its way towards Lakshmana. It was just then that Hanuman arrived on the scene and took hold of the trident. He did so with as much ease with which an elephant plucks a sugarcane!

The sudden and solemn appearance of Hanuman astounded Manidhwaja who mistook him to be Shiva and was about to bow down to him. But Hanuman laughed and said, "Be sure, I'm no Shiva. I'm Hanuman, a mere servant of Shri Ramachandra."

He thereafter raised his mace and attacked Manidhwaja. In time did Manidhwaja escape to his safety and from distance observed Hanuman with wonder. Never in his life had he seen such a beautiful and luminous figure as that of Hanuman—with a pair of eyes giving out crystal flames! Manidhwaja lost all hope of his life and meditated on the Pasupata weapon. The weapon reached his hand

and he discharged it aiming at Hanuman.

The supernatural weapon, on its way, flashed the region with its weird light. Lakshmana, Bharata, Shatrugna as well as their soldiers swooned away. But Hanuman stepped forward and stood defying the weapon, muttering the name of Rama.

The weapon was seen touching Hanuman's breast. But then it got absorbed in his body. Without allowing any further time to pass, Hanuman smashed Manidhwaja's chariot with his mace. Manidhwaja fled into his temple and prayed to Shiva.

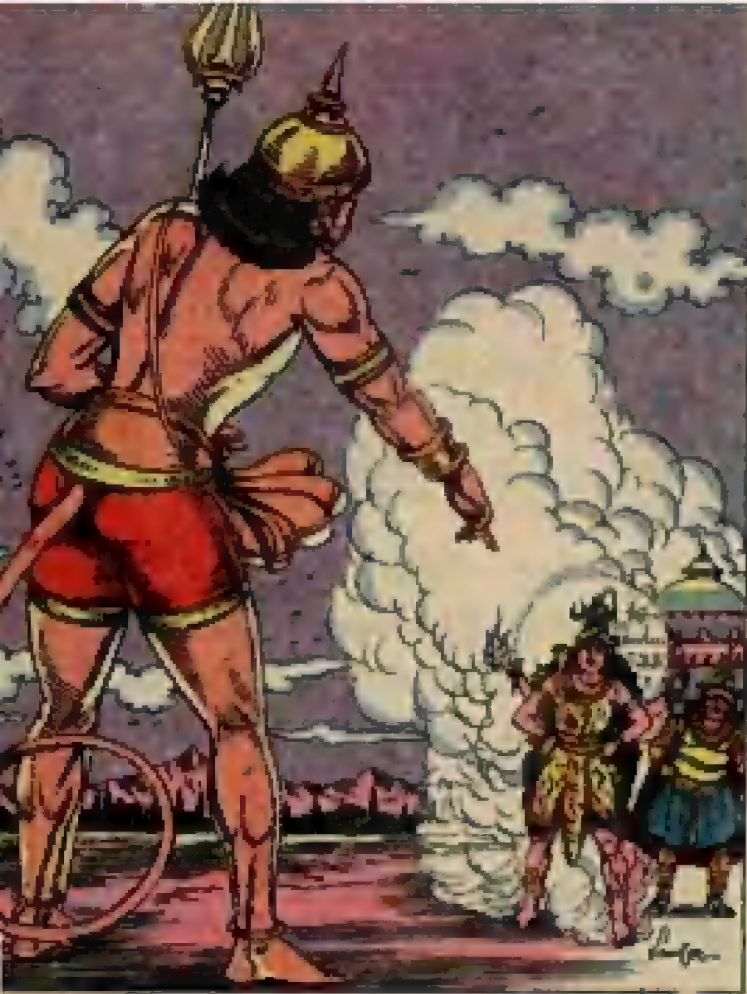
"What is this, Manidhwaja!

Had you not announced that even a hundred Ramas would not be able to stand before you? How is it that you seem so helpless before a mere servant of Rama? Get up and face your enemy again. I shall be with you."

True to His word, Shiva appeared in the open, seated on his bull. Manidhwaja followed him. Both advanced towards Hanuman.

"You may be the great God. But I have no reason to be afraid of you!" shouted Hanuman and he sprang forward. The bull got terrified. It threw Shiva down and fled.





Shiva got up and told Hanuman, "You could tame my trident. The Pasupata weapon was lost on you. If you are not myself, you have to be Vishnu."

"I am a mere devotee of Rama who is human in form. A Vanara, I owe my strength to Rama's Grace alone. I should not be compared to a great God like Yourself or Vishnu. The *Yajna* which my master, Rama, is going to perform, will do good to the world. Hence I must see that his horse returns unmolested. Manidhwaja claims to be a devotee of Yours. How then does he

conduct himself like a tyrant?" Hanuman demanded in a roaring voice.

Shiva smiled and said, "Be careful, Hanuman, now that I am going to open my third eye."

"Please do so quickly, O Lord, so that your blind devotee's eyes could open!" said Hanuman.

Shiva opened his third eye. At once a volley of bright fire, capable of destroying anything, came shooting at Hanuman. But Hanuman merely extended his right hand and directed the flow of fire into his mouth, saying, "I offer this to Rama!" He swallowed the fire just as Shiva had swallowed the poison during the churning of the ocean.

Shiva now turned to Manidhwaja and said, "Do you see? I am unable to harm Hanuman because he is an emanation of myself. That alone explains why my weapons fail to harm him. You must try to understand things properly. How would you otherwise claim to be my devotee?"

Shiva disappeared thereafter.

Hanuman flew down to the Dronagiri hills and fetched a medicinal herb with which he

revived Rama's brothers and their soldiers.

Manidhwaja now realised his blunder. He prostrated himself to Hanuman.

"Ego and arrogance rendered your devotion quite ineffective. One cannot resort to spiritual help for fulfilling one's personal ambition forever. Because people like you misuse their power, many lose their faith in God. Truth appears distorted and perverted. However, it is never too late to turn to the right path. As a king, you should now give all your attention to the true welfare of your subjects. Let your devotion be matched with humility," said Hanuman.

"O great soul! I would have continued to be stupid had I not been humiliated by you. My deity, Shiva, taught me the right lesson at the right time, through you. What I had not learnt in my long life, I came to learn in a moment. I must hasten to meet Rama. I should apologise to him for my ugly behaviour and pray to him to count me as one of his friends.

Manidhwaja then surrendered the horse to Lakshmana.

The horse was again left to wander free and Lakshmana



and others followed it. Manidhwaja gave them a warm send off.

Manidhwaja had two charming daughters, twins, named, Shobha and Shubha. He took them along with himself on his journey to Ayodhya. After duly apologising to Rama, he presented his daughters to him and proposed their marriage with Lava and Kusha. Rama gladly consented to the proposal. The marriage was scheduled to be performed soon after the *Yajna*.

Those people of Manipur who had taken refuge in Ayodhya now returned to their own land

at Manidhwaja's request. Needless to say, Manidhwaja lifted all restriction on the freedom of worship.

Soon the wandering horse returned to Ayodhya. Preparations for the *Yajna* gathered momentum. From Kiskindhya came Sugriva, from Lanka came Vibhishana and from Manipur, Manidhwaja, among a host of other kings. Everyone had brought presents of great value. Vibhishana had brought bagfuls of pearls; Sugriva a huge quantity of gold. Manidhwaja had brought, along with a variety of jewels, a large load of silk. Other kings too vied with each other in heaping gifts on Rama.

Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrugna had returned after experiencing cordial receptions at the courts of various kings.

They had been followed by Hanuman and seers like Bharadwaja, Gautama, Atri and Agastya.

In due course arrived Viswamitra who had taught the secrets of wielding weapons to Rama. He was accorded a warm welcome by Rama.

The *Yajna* was performed with great enthusiasm. Gifts were distributed among all the households of Ayodhya. Subjects who were marked for meritorious service to the kingdom received rewards and honours.

At the invitation of Manidhwaja, the royal guests then proceeded to Manipur where Shubha was married to Kusha and Shobha to Lava. Manidhwaja made a gift of his kingdom to his two worthy sons-in-law and retired into the forest for penance. (to be continued)





THE ABANDONED CHILD

A poor man and his wife were on their way from one village to another. By the side of a road that had passed through a forest, they found an infant girl. She had been left alone with a note which read: "Whoever takes this unlucky girl will grow lucky!"

The couple had no child. The wife took the infant into her arms and the husband did not object to it.

After their work was over, they returned home and nurtured the child to the best of their ability. They bestowed all their love on it and never left it out of their sight.

But soon they realised why the girl had been described as

unlucky. She was blind. The discovery was a great disappointment to the couple. However, they tried to reconcile to the situation.

But, in due course they had children born to them. They felt the pang of their poverty more acutely. The blind girl was a constant botheration. She was not going to be of any help to them. Yet they must maintain her forever. Their love for the blind girl weakened. Once on object of their joy, the girl now seemed to be a curse. They tried to hand over her to some childless couple. But who will care to adopt a blind girl?

One day, in a moment of disgust, the man took the girl

out of his house. 'I shall leave her at a place where others will see her. There are many people who are well off and certainly someone will take pity on her and take her home,' he thought.

He led the girl to a river ghat. He had carried some food with him which he shared with the girl at night. Then both fell asleep.

The man got up at dawn. The girl was still asleep, peacefully. He had had a last look at her. He then wiped his eyes and began walking back home.

A little later the girl woke up. He called out for her foster father. When no response came, she thought that he had gone to fetch food for her. She began playing with the pebbles at hand. So many

people crossed the ghat, but none took any notice of her.

But as the man advanced homeward, his heart became filled with remorse. The sweet and innocent face of the girl haunted him. 'What must she be doing now? Was she crying? Could she have dreamt that he had abandoned her?' He asked himself.

Suddenly he turned and ran towards the ghat. He was delighted to see the girl playing peacefully with pebbles. She smiled when she heard his voice and showed what was in her hands.

The man, with a shock of delight, found that what the "unlucky" girl held out were five pieces of diamonds!

She, indeed, had brought luck to him!



THE BLIND WHO COULD SEE

A boy sat on the shoulders of his servant who was blind and directed him how he should go. At one place the boy said, "Here are trees abounding in apples. Take me closer to them so that I can pluck a few."

"Aren't the trees protected by fence?" asked the blind servant.

"They are not," replied the boy.

"Are there many people around?" asked the servant.

"Not a soul!" replied the boy.

"There must be somebody guarding the trees," observed the blind.

"Nobody is guarding them," reported the boy.

"In that case, either the fruits are not apples or they are of a kind which are hardly eatable," said the blind.

The boy tried one and spat it out and said, "You may be physically blind, but you can see better than I do!"





THE IDEAL STABLE!

Long long ago there was a king named Chitrasen who ruled over a vast kingdom. His administration was ideal and under him the kingdom prospered well. His capital, Jaynagar, became a great centre of trade and commerce.

But the king was ever eager to improve upon his administration. Once it occurred to him that the common people should participate in the government. But how could that be made possible? All the tens of thousands of people could not be consulted on an issue. After much thinking he decided that there should be committees of **wise and capable people**. These committees should do all that

was necessary for the people's welfare.

The king decided to make his new experiment in a big town named Sumanpur situated on the other end of the kingdom. He announced that the proposed committee would have twelve members. The committee would realise certain taxes from the people and spend the income for the benefit of the town.

But how to select the committee members? The king further announced that those who enjoyed the maximum public support should have their right to membership. How to know who enjoyed such support? The king found a simple

way for that. On an appointed day the candidates should meet him at the capital, bringing with them their supporters. Those who brought maximum supporters would be declared members of the committee.

The king's old minister was not happy with the scheme. But there were many in his court who found the scheme quite exciting. Also, excitement ran high at Sumanpur. The people of the town were all praise for the king. The minister kept quiet.

There was a young man at Sumanpur named Vikash. He was much loved by the youth

of the town. He had nothing in his mind but the welfare of the people. Under his leadership the youth of the town had founded many institutions such as schools, dispensaries and shelters for travellers. The king had heard much about him and was sure that Vikash would be the first one to find place in the committee.

Vikash and his friends did their best to educate the people on the significance of the king's decision. They told the people that they should support only such candidates who are really capable and who are not selfish.

The appointed day came.





About two dozen candidates arrived in the capital. Each one had brought a large number of people to support him. The twelve who had brought the maximum supporters were declared selected as members of the committee. The king was surprised that Vikash was not among the two dozen candidates. However, he advised the members to elect a leader and serve the people sincerely. The members promised to elect the leader within a week.

But even after a month they had not been able to elect a leader. The king was unhappy. He asked the minister what the

problem with the members could be.

"My lord, each of the twelve wants to become the leader. Each one is trying to influence the other eleven in his favour. That is why they have not been able to come to a decision and I doubt if they will ever come!"

The king summoned the members to his court and asked them to choose a leader in his presence. They looked at each other and almost all of them said simultaneously, "My lord, you choose the leader on our behalf."

The king obliged them by choosing an elderly member of the committee as the leader. The members thanked the king and left for Sumanpur.

Now, each member of the committee was eager to get as much work done as possible for his own area. If a well was sunk where there was none, a jealous member would demand that a well be sunk in his area too, even if there was no need for it!

Whenever a dispute arose, the leader did not find enough courage in him to settle it. He found it convenient to carry the matter to the king and get his decision. On an average, he

visited the town once a week.

Soon other members who disagreed with the leader began visiting the capital too, to tell the king their points of view. At the beginning the king was quite happy to participate in the work of the committee. But after a while he began to feel bored. His intervention was demanded on every small issue.

The king had decided the tenure of the committee as four years. As the period came to an end, he was eager to see for himself how Sumanpur had developed under the committee's administration.

"Let us visit Sumanpur in disguise," proposed the king. The minister agreed. Both donned the clothes of travellers and arrived at Sumanpur.

"Well, the town looks pretty clean and elegant. The people seem to be leading an orderly life," observed the king.

"Right, my lord," agreed the minister. Next he greeted a passer-by and told him, "We are from another kingdom. Your town seems to be a nice place—thanks to your committee!"

"Committee? If thank you must, then thank Vikash and



his friends. It is they who work for the town. If you want any benefit from the committee, then you must die and take rebirth as a horse!" said the passer-by and he left.

The king and his minister felt bewildered. However, they proceeded farther and asked another man, "You are lucky to have a committee in your town. We don't have such a thing in our town!"

"Lucky? Do I seem to you like a horse? If the committee has brought luck to any creatures, it is to horses, not to us!" replied the man in a huff.

The king and his minister,

red more than ever, soon
Vikash.

"How is it, young man, that you are not a member of the committee although you are doing so much for the people of this town?" they enquired of him.

Vikash was frank with them. He said, "The king, in his innocence, wanted to see how much public support the candidates had. Each candidate had to lead a batch of supporters to the capital. Now, the capital is situated at a distance of three days' walk. Only those wealthy fellows who could afford to spend on their supporters' food

and could arrange to take with them cooks, utensils and tents, became candidates. My joy lies in serving the people. I can serve them, if I wish to, even without becoming a member. The people also know that I am at their disposal whether I be a member or not. Thus, I am not a member of the committee."

"What do your people mean when they say that one must become a horse if one were to benefit from the committee?" asked the minister.

Vikash laughed and explained, "That is a joke. As I told you, it takes three days to



reach the capital. Riding a horse, one can be there in one day. As the leader of the committee felt it necessary to meet the king once a week, he bought a pair of fine horses. Soon other members demanded horses for them too. Two dozen horses were bought. A large stable was constructed to keep them. A veterinary physician, a stable-superintendent and ten servants were employed to look after them. The stable became famous. When outsiders visited our town, our members prided in guiding them to the stable and showing them the prize horses. To keep the horses fit and attractive, a large amount of money is spent on them. Needless to say, all that is public money!"

The king was stupefied. He returned to the capital and passed orders dissolving the committee. Now, his chief con-



cern was to educate the people about their rights and duties. He taught them that in showing their support to a candidate they must judge him by his ability and willingness to serve them—not by his ability to feed them!

This is to remind our readers that the entries they send either for the Photo-Caption Contest or the Story-Title Contest must be per post-card alone and not by any other means, envelope or inland letter card.

Secondly, entries for the two competitions must come separately—not by the same post-card.

We will not be surprised if our judges consider the violation of these principles as disqualifications.

—Publisher

ACCURATE PREDICTION

Bhombal was not required to do any work as long as his father was alive. But his father's sudden death obliged him to think of some means of livelihood. He decided to gather wood and sell them. He climbed a tree, settled on a branch, and began cutting it from its bottom.

"Don't do it, you fool! You shall fall down along with the branch," cautioned a traveller. But Bhombal paid no heed to the warning. Needless to say, he had a big fall before long.

He got up and soon caught up with the traveller, and said, "You must be an astrologer to have predicted my fall accurately. Now, be kind enough to tell me when I am destined to die!"

The traveller looked at him derisively and replied, "You shall die when your donkey sneezes thrice!"

Bhombal was returning home with his donkey. There was a small fire by the roadside. The smoke made the donkey sneeze.

"You sneeze twice more and I am gone!" cried out Bhombal and he tied the beast's mouth with a piece of cloth. That made the donkey sneeze again. Quite panicky, Bhombal now shut the beast's nostrils with two pebbles and tied its mouth again. The pebbles made the donkey sneeze for the third time.

Bhombal lay sprawled, senseless. Passers-by sprinkled water on him and fanned him. He opened his eyes and sat up and asked, "You don't have to tell me that I am dead. But please tell me whether I am in heaven or hell!"





A Lesson For The Tantrik

Biren claimed himself a tantrik and the innocent villagers believed him. He knew nothing of the tantrik lore, but he had mastered the art of deceiving the people.

The young Prabhakar, however, was never influenced by him. He had a strong impression that the fellow was a cheat. He waited for a chance to expose him.

Biren would suddenly appear before some householder and demand of him all he needed for living comfortably for a month. The people did not dare to refuse him, lest he should cause them misfortune through black magic.

One day Biren appeared before Prabhakar's house and said.

"You are to maintain me for a month beginning from today. Despatch to my house a bagful of superfine rice, a tin of ghee and a sackful of potatoes. Thereafter continue to send a couple of coconuts, a few sweets and a basketful of fresh vegetables and a jar of milk everyday."

"I won't give you even a spoonful of salt!" declared Prabhakar.

"What!" screamed Biren. "Nobody had been disrespectful to me so far. Do you wish to be taught a lesson?"

"I don't care a jot!" Prabhakar knowingly provoked Biren.

"Wait and see what happens to you within twentyfour hours!" shouted Biren with threatening gestures as he left. Several

villagers heard his warning.

At night Prabhakar sat with a few of his friends in a private meeting.

In the morning it was found that Prabhakar lay sprawled on the ground, complaining of unbearable pain in the chest.

Those who had heard Biren's threat concluded that it was he who punished Prabhakar by the virtue of his black magic. Prabhakar's friends, along with some gentlemen of the village, met Biren.

"O great tantrik, it is your wrath which is the cause of Prabhakar's suffering. Be pleased to cure him," they pleaded with Biren with folded hands.

Prabhakar felt flattered. He said, "It is true that I have caused him agony. People should know what it means to insult me. I am not going to

cure him."

Instantly the young men took hold of him.

"You have confessed that you are responsible for Prabhakar's suffering. Unless you cure him within five minutes we will see that you too suffer like him!" they shouted.

Biren cried out, "Leave me. I have done nothing to him!"

"Hadn't you threatened to punish him through your black magic?" demanded the gentlemen.

"That was only a threat. What do I know of black magic?" cried out Biren.

"Correct. You know nothing," said Prabhakar on reaching the spot. "You must cease to deceive the people. And leave this village immediately"

Biren agreed to it and was released.



HAWA MAHAL OF JAIPUR

In the moonlit nights this building looks like a dream-castle. Built by Maharaja Sawai Pratap Singh of Jaipur, Rajasthan, in 1799, this 5-storeyed palace has numerous semi-octagonal windows with perforated screens. The interior is always breezy and that gives the building its name — Hawa Mahal — the Palace of Breezes!



OF HUMAN PRIVILEGES!

"The General's Siamese tabby cat which was kidnapped by a wolf was found on the roadside, almost murdered. He was operated by the doctor, but there was a mistake in the doctor's weapon."

Had the Siamese tabby and the wolf a fair knowledge of English usage, they would have felt quite flattered at the aforesaid description of the incident given by a captain's son who looked forward to grow into a press reporter. The wolf would have delayed his escape in order to give an interview to the boy, for to *kidnap* or to be *kidnapped*, to *murder* or to be *murdered*, are the privileges of men, not of animals. An animal can only steal and kill or be stolen and killed! And when it comes to being operated, well, neither animal nor man, but only machines are operated. A doctor can of course *operate on* a man or an animal.

But not with weapon (to which our would be press reporter's father is accustomed), only with surgical instruments. Again, there can be no *mistake* in an instrument, there can be a defect though. Mistakes can be made only by a living being.





Who were the first people to smoke?

N. Ramachandran Kurup,
Adipur (Kutch).

From whatever research has been done on tobacco and smoking it appears that America was the home of the tobacco plant. The smoking pipes of the earliest varieties have been found in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa. Columbus and his party were amazed to see the natives giving out smokes from their mouths! Jean Nicot (from whose name the word nicotine has been derived), the French ambassador to Portugal, brought tobacco to his own country and introduced it to the French queen. He did so early in the sixteenth century. But the practice of smoking received a great boost when, late in that century, Ralph Lane, the first British Governor of Virginia, presented a pipe to Sir Walter Raleigh who was fascinated by it. Soon it spread among the nobility and then among the common people of England.

According to a historian of tobacco, "no other plant has influenced as extensively as the tobacco the economic and cultural life of all humanity."

It is now conclusively proved that smoking is not only a cause of cancer, it is dangerous to health in several ways.

(Readers are requested not to send new questions for a few months. Let your magazine finish answering at least a part of the backload of questions.)

CHOOSE A TITLE AND WIN A REWARD

(You are invited to choose a title for the following story and write it down on a post card and mail it to "Story-title Contest", Chandamama, 2 & 3 Arcot Road, Madras 600 026, to reach us by the 20th of September. A reward of-Rs. 25.00 will go to the best entry, which will be published in the November '78 issue. Please do not use the same card for entering the Photo-Caption Contest).



Once two princes had a dispute as to which one was more tasteful - the ludoos or the rasogolla.

"The chief judge of our kingdom is known to decide every issue quite impartially. Let us resort to his opinion on our dispute," proposed one of the princes. The other one at once agreed to it.

It was a holiday. The princes invited the judge to the palace and put their dispute before him.

The judge listened gravely and attentively. Then he said, "Well, the parties in this quarrel are the ludoos and the rasogollas. How can I give my judgment without examining both?"

Immediately dishfuls of ludoos and rasogollas were placed before the judge. The judge made the best use of them with the same gravity and attention.

"Now, what is your judgment?" asked the princes.

"Well, to speak truthfully, both the parties are residing in my tummy in great peace and harmony. There isn't the slightest dispute between them!" said the judge.

Result of Story Title Contest held in July Issue

The Prize is awarded to:

Mr. K. Nirmal Shenoy

28/438, Azad Nagar, Off Veera Desai Road,

Andhari (West), Bombay 400 058.

Winning Entry — 'JESTING TO FREEDOM'

PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



Mr. Nirmal Singh



Ms. I. Uma Rani

- These two photographs are somewhat related. • Can you think of suitable captions ? Could be single words, are several words, but the two captions must be related to each other.
- Rs. 25 will be awarded as prize for the best caption. Remember, your entry must reach us by 20th SEPTEMBER
- Winning captions will be announced in NOVEMBER issue
- Write your entry on a POST CARD, specify the month, give your full name, address, age and post to :

**PHOTO CAPTION. CONTEST
CHANDAMAMA MAGAZINE
MADRAS - 600 026**

Result of Photo Caption Contest held in July Issue

The Prize is awarded to:

Mr. T. K. Ramkumar,

237/14, 4th Main Road,

Vyalikaval, Bangalore 560 003.

Winning Entry — 'Pride of Possession' — 'Pains of Profession'

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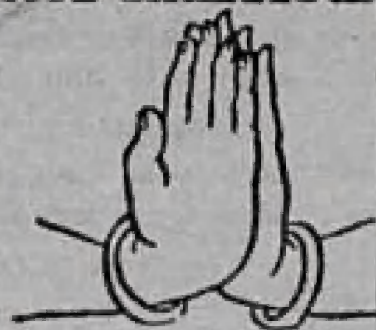


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